2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

months November to March inclusive. Diagram 1 shows the distribution of the rainfall during the year. Very little rain falls during other months. The initial rains of the year are ushered in by convectional storms and very heavy downpours. This causes a heavy run-off, flooding of the rivers and lake shores, and much erosion of the parched land which by this time has become

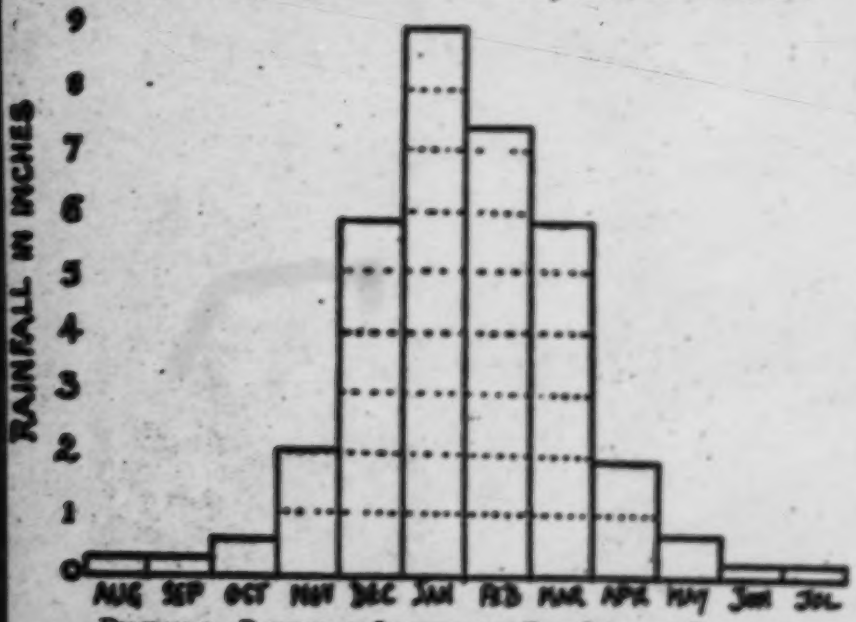

DIAGRAM 1. RAINFALL IN LIWONDE AND PORT JOHNSTON DISTRICTS.
This diagram shows that almost the whole of the rainfall occurs between November and April.

very dusty. During December there is usually little rain for a short period of a week or two. After that the rains change their character and become more steady and drenching. They decrease in March and April, and thereafter, little rain falls.

The Yao concept of the seasons follows this feature of the climate. The year is divided into two seasons, called *caku*, the wet season, and *cau*, the dry season. The wet season is the one in which most agricultural activity is carried out. The gardens are hoed up and planted, weeded and tended, and the crops harvested, between the months of October and May. During

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the dry season, in contrast to the busy wet season, there is much visiting and social activities are resumed. Dances and initiation ceremonies also are mostly held during the dry season. The only agricultural work done during this time is the clearing of the bush and the stacking of the brushwood ready for burning.

The temperatures are high. I have no records for the three stations in the area because recording has started only recently. It is hottest during the months just preceding the rains, i.e. September to December, and coldest during May to August. I have never heard of frosts in the area so it is unlikely that the temperature falls below freezing point. Hornby records the mean maximum temperature for Liwonde as 82·3° F. and the mean minimum temperature as 59·3° F. These are for Liwonde station which is in the Shire Valley. The temperature for the plains and the highlands is probably a few degrees less.

Vegetation

The natural vegetation in this area varies from thick rain forest along the permanent watercourses to open grassland in the marshy patches. In forestry reserves and other places where the vegetation has not been cut out, trees 20 to 30 feet high predominate with thin undergrowth. Along the Shire Valley much of the vegetation is untouched, but in the highlands and on the plain most of the unprotected forest has been cut out for garden lands. In the open spaces between trees the land is covered by elephant grass six to eight feet high.

Population

The density of the population in Nyasaland as a whole is high in comparison with that in the surrounding territories.[1] Within the Territory itself the densities in some districts are as high as anywhere in Africa.[2] The population as a whole is concentrated in the highland districts of Dedza and the Shire Highlands. The districts in which I worked are less densely populated than most of the districts in the Southern Province, but of average density

[1] Expressing densities as total population per square mile. Nyasaland, 55·5 (1945); Tanganyika, 17·0 (1946); Portuguese East Africa, 14·5 (1938); Southern Rhodesia, 11·5 (1946); Northern Rhodesia, 5·0 (1946).

[2] Chiradzulu district, 309·8; Cholo, 191·9; Zomba, 152·4. *Nyasaland Census*, 1945, Table 8.